

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of preparing a description of an item for an online auction, said method
2 comprising:

3 receiving a unique code corresponding to the item at a first computer system;
4 retrieving one or more characteristics corresponding to the unique code from a
5 data storage area; and
6 transmitting the one or more characteristics to a requestor.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the item is a computer system.

1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 connecting the first computer system to a computer network;
3 wherein the requestor includes a second computer system, the second
4 computer system being connected to the computer network; and
5 wherein the transmitting includes sending data across the computer network to
6 the second computer system.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving the one or more characteristics at a second computer system; and
3 sending the one or more characteristics from the second computer system to an
4 online auction site.

1 5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:
2 displaying the one or more characteristics on a display screen connected to the
3 second computer system; and
4 modifying the one or more characteristics using an input device connected to
5 the second computer system.

- 1 6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 receiving the one or more characteristics at a second computer system;
3 executing a configuration utility on the second computer system, the
4 configuration utility programmed to determine the configuration of the
5 second computer system; and
6 updating the one or more characteristics corresponding to the configuration.
- 1 7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:
2 sending the configuration from the second computer system to the first
3 computer system;
4 receiving the configuration at the first computer system; and
5 updating the one or more characteristics stored in the data storage area based
6 on the configuration.
- 1 8. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 determining one or more compatible subparts for the item; and
3 transmitting the one or more compatible subparts to the requestor.
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- 1 9. A method of preparing a description of a computer system for an online auction,
2 said method comprising:
3 executing a configuration utility on the first computer system, the
4 configuration utility programmed to determine the one or more
5 characteristics of the first computer system; and
6 transmitting the one or more characteristics to a second computer system.
- 1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the second computer system is an online auction
2 computer system and wherein the transmitting is over a computer network
3 connecting the first computer system to the online auction computer system.

1 11. The method of claim 9 further comprising:
2 storing the one or more characteristics in a data storage area accessible from
3 the second computer system.

1 12. The method of claim 9 further comprising:
2 displaying the one or more characteristics on a display screen connected to the
3 first computer system; and
4 modifying the one or more characteristics using an input device connected to
5 the first computer system.

1 13. A method of upgrading a computer system, said method comprising:
2 receiving a list of one or more configuration items in the computer system;
3 determining a list of one or more components, the one or more components
4 compatible with the computer system;
5 selecting a component from the one or more substitute components; and
6 ordering the replacement component.
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1 14. The method of claim 13 further comprising:
2 accessing a computer network, the computer network connected to a merchant
3 computer;
4 obtaining a price corresponding to the one ore more components from the
5 merchant computer;
6 displaying the price on the display screen;
7 wherein the ordering includes sending the merchant a purchase request for the
8 replacement component.

1 15. The method of claim 14 further comprising:
2 acquiring a street price corresponding to the one or more configuration items,
3 the acquiring

4 obtaining a price corresponding to the one or more substitute components from
5 the merchant computer;
6 displaying the price on the display screen;
7 wherein the ordering includes sending the merchant a purchase request for the
8 replacement component.

1 16. The method of claim 13 wherein the receiving includes:
2 accessing a computer network, the computer network connected to the
3 computer system and to a second computer system;
4 sending a unique code corresponding to the computer system from the
5 computer system to the second computer system over the computer
6 network; and
7 receiving at the computer system the list of configuration items sent from the
8 second computer system.

1 17. The method of claim 13 wherein the receiving includes:
2 accessing a computer network, the computer network connected to the
3 computer system and to a second computer system;
4 sending a unique code corresponding to the computer system from the
5 computer system to the second computer system over the computer
6 network; and
7 receiving at the computer system the list of configuration items sent from the
8 second computer system.

1 18. The method of claim 13 wherein the receiving includes:
2 executing a configuration utility on the computer system, the configuration
3 utility programmed to determine the one or more configuration items;
4 and
5 storing the one or more configuration items in a memory accessible by the
6 computer system.

1 19. A method of purchasing a new computer system, said method comprising:
2 analyzing an old computer system resulting in an old computer configuration;
3 receiving new computer configuration data corresponding to the new computer
4 system;
5 comparing the old computer configuration with the new computer
6 configuration resulting in one or more re-usable components; and
7 ordering the new computer system without one or more re-usable components.

1 20. The method of claim 19 wherein the analyzing includes:
2 executing a configuration utility on the old computer system, the configuration
3 utility programmed to determine the old computer configuration; and
4 storing the one or more configuration items in a memory accessible by the
5 computer system.

1 21. The method of claim 19 further comprising:
2 acquiring a street price corresponding to the old computer system configured
3 without the one or more re-usable components
4 obtaining a new computer price corresponding to the new computer system
5 configured without the one or more re-usable components; and
6 calculating a transaction price by subtracting the street price from the new
7 computer price.

1 22. The method of claim 19 further comprising:
2 transmitting the old computer configuration to an online auction computer,
3 wherein the online auction computer is connected to a computer
4 network, the computer network connecting the online auction site
5 computer system to a first computer system computer.

1 23. A computer system comprising:
2 a processor;
3 a nonvolatile memory coupled to the processor;
4 a communications port connecting the computer system to a computer
5 network;
6 a computer program stored in the nonvolatile memory and executed by the
7 processor, wherein the computer program operates to:
8 send a unique code to a second computer system, the second computer
9 system being connected to the computer network;
10 receive configuration data corresponding to the unique code from the
11 second computer system; and
12 transmit an auction description to a auction computer, the auction
13 description including the configuration data and the auction
14 computer being connected to the computer network.

1 24. The computer system of claim 23 wherein the computer software further
2 comprises:
3 access a merchant computer system, the merchant computer system connected
4 to the computer network;
5 select a new computer system available from the merchant computer system;
6 receive new configuration data corresponding to the new computer system;
7 compare the new configuration data with the configuration data resulting in
8 one or more compatible components.
1

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